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SUBJECT: DCM MEETINGS WITH KURDISTAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY  
(KNA) CHAIRMAN AND KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT (KRG)  
MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR

This is a Kurdistan Regional Reconstruction Team (RRT) cable.

11. Summary: (SBU) Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) Butenis held separate meetings in Erbil on July 22 with Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA) Chairman Adnan Mufti and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Minister of Interior (MOI) Karim Sinjari. DCM stressed the need for concrete progress on reconciliation and other major issues in order to retain Congressional and US public support. Both Mufti and Sinjari blamed Sunni intransigence for the inability of the Government of Iraq (GOI) to move ahead on reconciliation. Mufti's deputy hinted at possible violence if Article 140 is not implemented on schedule, while MOI Sinjari indicated that a postponement of the Referendum may be possible if there is tangible progress on the process. Mufti and Sinjari called for closer cooperation between the KRG and the US, but Sinjari rejected a recent US request to allow 60 Palestinian families to reside temporarily in the KRG. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) DCM Butenis, accompanied by Office of Provincial Affairs (OPA) Director Clarke, Regional Reconstruction Team (RRT) Erbil Deputy Team Leader Baily, IPAO, and EMBOFFs held meetings with Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA) Chairman Adnan Mufti and Kurdistan Regional Government Minister of the Interior Karim Sinjari during a 22 July visit to Erbil.

KNA SPEAKER MUFTI MEETING: KRG WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A US CONSULATE

13. (U) At the Mufti meeting, other KNA members present included an Assyrian Christian, a Turkoman, and Kemal Kurkukli, the deputy KNA speaker. Mufti opened by noting that the KRG wanted to work closely with the US Government, "in all aspects," and to this end would like to see a US Consulate established in Erbil.

DCM: CONTINUED US SUPPORT TO IRAQ DEPENDENT ON PROGRESS ON MAJOR ISSUES

14. (SBU) The DCM responded that it is hard to maintain the American people's support for our work when it appears that each group in Iraq only wants to maintain its own position ) it is difficult for Americans to understand, she said, why there is no agreement on the major issues before the government. Mufti answered that the problems in Iraq go back to the country's creation, which he called "a mistake" carried out by foreigners, after which authority remained in the hands of the Sunnis for 80 years. Now the Sunnis have lost power, but many ex-Baathists "want to go back" to the old regime, even though it is impossible.

KRG CONSTITUTION AND ARTICLE 140

15. (SBU) Asked about the status of the KRG Constitution, Mufti said that the draft has been completed and a 19 member committee is reviewing public comments on it. The Committee, he said, is in not in a great hurry to finish. According to

Mufti, ratification of the Constitution will be postponed until after Article 140 is implemented. Mufti added that Article 140 "should not be delayed(it is in the Constitution."

¶6. (SBU) Deputy KNA Chairman Kemal Kirkukli stated that Ambassador Negroponte had endorsed in writing a "timely implementation" for Article 140. Kirkukli also claimed that the "majority of residents in the Article 140 area," including the ethnic and religious minorities, support the referendum, with the exception of a "tiny pocket of Turkomans" that was associated with the Baathist Party. Kirkukli expressed disappointment that former US Ambassador Khalilizad had proposed a delay in Article 140 implementation at the UN. If Article 140 is not implemented, Kirkukli said, it will cause serious problems, "too significant for us to control," and could lead to "terrorism."

#### KRG ACTIONS TO STEM HONOR KILLINGS

¶7. (SBU) DCM Butenis then asked about PM Barzani's recent condemnation of "honor killings" as murder. Mufti replied that honor killings of women are an issue in the KRG, and have been on the rise recently. One reason for this increase is the increased freedom that women have in Kurdish society, which is "not accepted by some." He noted that the KRG has eliminated a Baathist law that absolved perpetrators of honor killings, and has also made efforts to settle issues "between families" in order to help avoid honor killings. He added that Kurdish religious leaders had recently made an announcement opposing honor killings.

¶8. (SBU) The meeting closed with Mufti asking that the US "not get too caught up in security in Kurdistan(you need to

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get out and be seen in the media(just going to see President Barzani is not enough."

#### MEETING WITH MOI SINJARI: SECURITY SITUATION

¶9. (SBU) The day's second meeting, with KRG Minister of the Interior Karim Sinjari, was also attended by Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, head of the Foreign Relations Department. Minister Sinjari opened by repeating a common KRG theme, that people think "all of Iraq is like Baghdad," when in fact the KRG is "stable and okay." He added, however, that terrorists operate openly in Kirkuk and Mosul, and that terrorists have been leaving Diyala and other areas under heavy Coalition Forces' pressure and moving to locales such as Bayji and Hawija, the "Zab area" where the US and GOI presence is less.

¶10. (SBU) The terrorists, he said, continue trying to infiltrate the KRG. Despite the KRG's success in combating them, they are still sometimes successful, and the KRG would like more assistance to counter them. Sinjari described Mosul as an especially good operational base for terrorists due to its population's Arab Nationalist and Wahabiist sympathies, and its proximity to Syria and the corridor south to Tikrit and Anbar.

#### KRG NIXES PRM REQUEST FOR TEMPORARY STAY BY PALESTINIANS

¶11. (SBU) The DCM asked Sinjari if the KRG had responded to a recent request from the State Department's Refugee (PRM) Bureau to allow a group of 60 Palestinian families from other parts of Iraq to reside temporarily in the KRG until their processing for third country resettlement is completed. Sinjari stated that the KRG had "answered this question several times" and had not changed its earlier negative responses. He cited security and political reasons for this decision, claiming that the Palestinians are closely associated with "Sadr and former Baathists."

#### ARTICLE 140: POSTPONEMENT POSSIBLE

¶12. (SBU) Concerning Article 140 and the possibility of postponement, Sinjari said that he wants Article 140 Implementation to happen, but if everything "stays like now" and no progress is made on the preparatory work, "it will be a big problem." Postponement would only be a possibility if the people can at least "see some progress" being made toward an eventual referendum, he said.

#### US BASES IN KURDISTAN AND PROGRESS ON BENCHMARKS

¶13. (SBU) The DCM asked how Sinjari saw Iraq and the KRG a year from now. Sinjari responded that the "best outcome" would be a federal state. The Sunnis, he said, were spoiled by their earlier monopoly on power ) they want to get power back. They must come to understand that the old situation is finished. When they understand that, then they can reconcile. He added that the US is talking to the wrong people ) the US typically forgets tribal leaders and other traditional leaders, he said, who "often have influence with the Sunnis and want normal lives." Minister Bakir added that the US should change its strategy to focus on securing a few bases, "in Kurdistan, and Central and Southern Iraq," to let keep Iraq's neighbors in check, while the Iraqi forces did the "street fighting."

¶14. (SBU) DCM closed by noting that the future role of US forces depends not only on President Bush's policy, but also on continued Congressional and public support. Concrete evidence is needed, she said, of political reconciliation, especially since the various benchmark formulations have entered the US public consciousness. She noted that we do not think, for example, that a Kurd-Shia alliance excluding Sunnis is a good idea. Sunnis must be included.

¶15. (SBU) COMMENT: Although most of Sinjari and Mufti's comments reiterated positions we had heard before, Sinjari's refusal to consider State/PRM's recent resettlement request for a small group of Palestinians was surprising, since Sinjari had seemed receptive during an earlier meeting when this proposal was originally presented. Sinjari's position on a possible postponement of Article 140 is another sign that some parts of the KRG leadership may be willing to consider an Article 140 postponement in the right circumstances. END COMMENT.  
BUTENIS